

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image forming apparatus connected to an external device by which a request for printing can be set by a print requesting person comprising:

5 a storage device having a plurality of storage areas corresponding to a characteristic value allocated for each print requesting person;

 an interface for receiving a print request from the external device;

10 a controller for, when receiving a print request from the external device via the interface, storing print data in the print request into that storage area in the storage device which has been allocated the same characteristic value as the characteristic value in the
15 print request; and

 an image forming unit for subjecting print data stored in the storage areas in the storage device to image formation processing on a storage area basis.

20 2. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a timer for counting the current time, and wherein the controller, when receiving a print start time in addition to print data and a characteristic value as a print request from the external device, stores the print data and
25 the print start time into a storage area having a characteristic value that matches the characteristic value so that they are associated with each other, and

the image forming unit subjects print data associated with the print start time that coincides with the current time to image formation processing on a storage area basis.

5 3. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the controller, when there is no storage area which has the same characteristic value as a characteristic value in a print request received from the external device set up on it, creates a storage
10 area allocated the received characteristic value in the storage device and stores print data in the print request into the created storage area.

 4. An image forming apparatus connected to an external device by which a request for printing can
15 be set by a print requesting person comprising:

 a storage device having storage areas divided by print start time;

 an interface for receiving a print request from the external device;

20 a controller for, when receiving a print request from the external device via the interface, storing print data in the print request into that storage area in the storage device which has been allocated the same print start time as a print start time in the print
25 request;

 a timer for counting the current time; and

 an image forming unit for subjecting print data

stored in that storage area in the storage device which has been allocated a print start time that coincides with the current time counted by the timer to image formation processing.

5 5. The image forming apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the controller, when there is no storage area which has been allocated the same print start time as a print start time in a print request received from the external device, creates a storage
10 area allocated the print start time in the print request in the storage device and stores print data in the print request into the created storage area.

 6. An image forming apparatus connected to an external device by which a request for printing can
15 be set by a print requesting person comprising:

 a storage device having first storage areas divided by print start time, each first storage area being divided into second storage areas corresponding to a characteristic value;

20 an interface for receiving a print request from the external device;

 a controller for, when receiving a print request from the external device via the interface, storing print data in the print request into, in a first
25 storage area allocated the same print start time as a print start time in the print request, that second storage area which has been allocated the same

characteristic value as a characteristic value in the print request;

a timer for counting the current time; and

an image forming unit for subjecting print data
5 stored in the first storage area allocated a print start time that coincides with the current time counted by the timer to image formation processing on a second storage area basis.

7. The image forming apparatus according to
10 claim 6, wherein, when, in a first storage area allocated the same print start time as a print start time in a print request received from the external device, there is no second storage area which has been allocated the same characteristic value as
15 a characteristic value in the print request, the controller creates a second storage area allocated the characteristic value in the print request in the first storage device and stores print data in the print request into the created second storage area.

8. The image forming apparatus according to
20 claim 6, wherein, when there is no first storage area which has been allocated the same print start time as a print start time in a print request received from the external device, the controller creates a first
25 storage area allocated the print start time in the print request in the storage device, then creates a second storage area allocated the characteristic

value in the print request in the created first storage area and stores print data in the print request into the created second storage area.

5 9. An image forming apparatus connected to an external device by which a request for printing can be set by a print requesting person comprising:

storage means having a plurality of storage areas corresponding to a characteristic value allocated for each print requesting person;

10 receiving means for receiving a print request from the external device;

control means for, when receiving a print request from the external device via the receiving means, storing print data in the print request into a storage area which has been allocated the same characteristic value as the characteristic value in the print request;
15 and

image forming means for subjecting print data stored in the storage areas in the storage device to
20 image formation processing on a storage area basis.

10. In an image forming system having an external device by which a request for printing can be set by a print request person and an image forming apparatus connected to the external device,

25 the external device comprises:

an operating device for setting a print request having a characteristic value allocated for a print

requesting person and print data; and

a first interface for sending a print request set by the operating device to the image forming apparatus, and

5 the image forming apparatus comprises:

a storage device having a plurality of storage areas corresponding to a characteristic value allocated for each print requesting person;

10 a second interface for receiving a print request from the external device;

a controller for, when receiving a print request from the external device via the interface, storing print data in the print request into a storage area which has been allocated the same characteristic value as the characteristic value in the print request; and
15

an image forming unit for subjecting print data stored in the storage areas in the storage device to image formation processing on a storage area basis.

11. The image forming apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the image forming apparatus further comprises a timer for counting the current time, and wherein the controller, when receiving a print start time in addition to print data and a characteristic value as a print request from the external device,
20 stores the print data and the print start time into a storage area having a characteristic value that matches the characteristic value in the print request
25

so that they are associated with each other, and the image forming unit subjects print data associated with the print start time that coincides with the current time to image formation processing on a storage area basis.

12. The image forming apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the controller, when there is no storage area which has been allocated the same characteristic value as a characteristic value in a print request received from the external device set up on it, creates a storage area allocated the received characteristic value in the print request in the storage device and stores print data in the print request into the created second storage area.

13. In an image forming system having an external device by which a request for printing can be set by a print request person and an image forming apparatus connected to the external device,

the external device comprises:

an operating device for setting a print request having a print start time and print data; and

a first interface for sending the print request set by the operating device to the image forming apparatus, and

the image forming apparatus comprises:

a storage device having storage areas divided by print start time;

a second interface for receiving a print request from the external device;

5 a controller for, when receiving a print request from the external device via the interface, storing print data in the print request into a storage area which has been allocated the same print start time as the print start time in the print request;

a timer for counting the current time; and

10 an image forming unit for subjecting print data stored in that storage area in the storage device which has been allocated a print start time that coincides with the current time counted by the timer to image formation processing.

15 14. The image forming apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the controller in the image forming apparatus, when there is no storage area which has been allocated the same print start time as a print start time in a print request received from the external device, creates a storage area allocated the print
20 start time in the print request in the storage device and stores print data in the print request into the created storage area.

25 15. The image forming apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the external device further comprises a display device for displaying print start times allocated to the storage areas in the storage device of the image forming apparatus, and the operating device

is arranged to set a print start time in a print request by making a selection from the print start times displayed by the display device.

5 16. In an image forming system having an external device by which a request for printing can be set by a print request person and an image forming apparatus connected to the external device,

the external device comprises:

10 an operating device for setting a print request having a characteristic value allocated for a print requesting person and print data, a print start time and print data; and

15 a first interface for sending a print request set by the operating device to the image forming apparatus, and

the image forming apparatus comprises:

20 a storage device having first storage areas divided by print start time, each first storage area being divided into second storage areas corresponding to a characteristic value;

a second interface for receiving a print request from the external device;

25 a controller for, when receiving a print request from the external device via the second interface, storing print data in the print request into, in a first storage area allocated the same print start time as a print start time in the print request, that

second storage area which has been allocated the same characteristic value as a characteristic value in the print request;

a timer for counting the current time; and

5 an image forming unit for subjecting print data stored in the first storage area allocated a print start time that coincides with the current time counted by the timer to image formation processing on a second storage area basis.

10 17. The image forming system according to claim 16, wherein, when, in a first storage area allocated the same print start time as a print start time in a print request received from the external device, there is no second storage area which has
15 been allocated the same characteristic value as a characteristic value in the print request, the controller creates a second storage area allocated the characteristic value in the print request in the first storage device and stores print data in the print
20 request into the created second storage area.

25 18. The image forming system according to claim 16, wherein, when there is no first storage area which has been allocated the same print start time as a print start time in a print request received from the external device, the controller creates a first storage area allocated the print start time in the print request in the storage device, then creates a second

storage area allocated the characteristic value in the print request in the created first storage area and stores print data in the print request into the created second storage area.

5 19. The image forming system according to claim 16, wherein the external device further comprises a display device for displaying print start times allocated to the storage areas in the storage device of the image forming apparatus, and the operating device
10 is arranged to set a print start time in a print request by making a selection from the print start times displayed by the display device.

20. In an image forming system having an external device by which a request for printing can be set by
15 a print request person and an image forming apparatus connected to the external device,

the external device comprises:

operating means for setting a print request having a characteristic value allocated for a print requesting
20 person and print data; and

transmitting means for sending a print request set by the operating means to the image forming apparatus,
and

the image forming apparatus comprises:

25 storage means having a plurality of storage areas corresponding to a characteristic value allocated for each print requesting person;

receiving means for receiving a print request from the external device;

control means for, when receiving a print request from the external device via the receiving means,
5 storing print data in the print request into a storage area which has been allocated the same characteristic value as the characteristic value in the print request;
and

10 image forming means for subjecting print data stored in the storage areas in the storage device to image formation processing on a storage area basis.